

007 to Direct Broadway Play

By Stuart W. Little

SEAN CONNERY, temporarily putting aside his guise of infallibility as James Bond, is going to direct a play for Broadway.

Connery's eagerness to tackle maybe a harder job than anything 007 has ever faced was announced yesterday morning without bluster or violence at a calm theater press conference at Sardi's.

His struggle against the odds of Broadway won't come until next season. The play, "The Secret of the World" by Ted Allan, for which Shelley Winters has already been cast, will go into rehearsal Nov. 1 for a late December opening.

In the meantime, he may

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or may not be making two more Bond films, depending upon the outcome of negotiations presently underway in London. The theater conference was set up this far in advance so that everyone can get used to the novelty of seeing the film industry's No. 1 box office star turned into a stage director and understand that Allan's play is the thing.

But Connery had to work quickly but firmly to convince

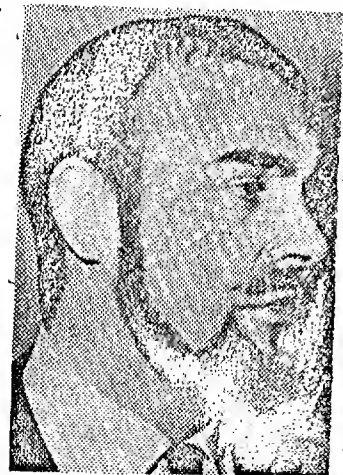
everyone that his dazzling film personality wasn't all, and that theater was for real. Behind him is a considerable stage background, submerged under his later success—classic roles with the Oxford Players, Hotspur in the BBC "Age of Kings," Holoferness in the "Judith" Harold Clurman directed in London and Macbeth (opposite Zoe Caldwell's Lady Macbeth) in Toronto.

In planning his professional debut as a director, Connery said, "I would be suspicious of any actor who has never had any aspirations as a director. It causes more interest in these cases because of the Bond image, as it were. I would say that 80 per cent of the directors I have worked with have been actors before."

As it happens, Connery's involvement with "The Secret of the World" predates the four famous Bond films. He has known the author for six weeks at Joan Littlewood's Stratford East in London. The play then got reviews from raves to pans, the author said, and has been considerably revised since, some of it with Connery's directorial hand in the last 12 months.

Allan is less surprised than anyone about Connery's serious theater interest. "Sean is so unlike the James Bond character that it's hilarious. He's a poet, you know. He writes very good poetry. And he's just written a ballet."

It was Miss Winters who brought up the substance of the play itself after Connery



Sean Connery

had been thoroughly questioned about his films and his switch to directing.

"There is a naive belief in America that if one side is wrong the other is right," she said. "Both sides can be wrong. The play is very relevant to America today. It is really about a political crisis in a family and the totality of the decision that is made."

Allan, a Montrealese by birth now living in London, has set the play in Montreal in 1956. The hero, still to be cast, is a left-wing labor leader involved in the world Socialist movement who believed "Stalin to be the embodiment of everything good and beautiful in life."

The play is being done in New York by producer Sidney Bernstein, who is best known for his off-Broadway productions of "The Blacks" and "The Blood Knot." He is also a long-term friend of the author and has held the rights to "The Secret of the World" for 15 months.